

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

LITERACY AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN: A WINNING COMBINATION?

by

Lieutenant Colonel Nicole L. Desilets-Bixler
United States Air National Guard

Colonel David L. Connors
Project Adviser

This SRP is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Strategic Studies Degree. The U.S. Army War College is accredited by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104, (215) 662-5606. The Commission on Higher Education is an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

The views expressed in this student academic research paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

Report Documentation Page			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
<p>Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.</p>				
1. REPORT DATE 15 MAR 2006	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED		
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Literacy and the Role of Women A Winning Combination?			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
			5b. GRANT NUMBER	
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Nicole Bixler-Desilets			5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
			5e. TASK NUMBER	
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College,Carlisle Barracks,Carlisle,PA,17013-5050			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.				
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES				
14. ABSTRACT See attached.				
15. SUBJECT TERMS				
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF: a. REPORT b. ABSTRACT c. THIS PAGE unclassified unclassified unclassified			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 20
19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON				

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Lieutenant Colonel Nicole L. Desilets-Bixler
TITLE: Literacy and the Role of Women: A Winning Combination?
FORMAT: Strategy Research Project
DATE: 06 March 2006 WORD COUNT: 5171 PAGES: 20
KEY TERMS: Democratization, Terrorism, Education, Middle East
CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

This research paper explores theory of democratic consolidation and uses a center of gravity analysis to determine strategy recommendations for combating the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and achieving enduring regime change in Afghanistan and Iraq. To date, most of the effort (military, political, informational, and economic) at combating terrorist organizations with global reach has been aimed at terrorism itself; that is, against the critical capability of conducting violent acts. This paper argues that efforts must be re-channeled and focused on the second critical capability in this center of gravity analysis, promotion of violent ideology. Delving deeper into the analysis, a critical requirement of promoting violent ideology is the insurance of illiteracy of the people and the repression of women. Widespread illiteracy and repression of women's role in society facilitates terrorists' abilities to find sanctuaries, recruit new terrorists, promote "mob" culture, promote intolerance, and ensure the stability of their oppressive regime. As a result, the critical vulnerabilities of radical Islamic terrorists and extremists include literacy programs, gender equality, promotion of tolerance and exposure to foreign ideas, religions, and cultures. These vulnerabilities should be the focus of U.S. foreign policy and strategy towards Iraq and Afghanistan.

LITERACY AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN: A WINNING COMBINATION

Since September 11, the United States has pursued several different approaches to combating the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and forging change in Afghanistan and Iraq. The first and most visible approach has been through force of arms. Afghanistan's known ties to Al-Qaeda were the primary reasons for embarking on Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Suspicions that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and Hussein's alleged ties to Al-Qaeda fueled Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). However, the reasons for embarking on military operations in both countries also centered on the removal of repressive and totalitarian regimes as moral justification for invasion. Prior to invading Iraq, President Bush stated that a democratic and stable Iraq could serve as a dramatic and inspiring model for the entire Middle East region.¹ Likewise, the spread of democracy through regime change supports the "democratic peace theory" which posits that democracies do not fight each other.² Although democracy in the Middle East might not completely resolve the problem of terrorism, it is arguable that a more open political environment combined with greater economic opportunity will likely weaken the pull of extremist ideologies that fuel violence, intolerance, and political alienation.

This research paper explores theory of democratic consolidation and uses a center of gravity analysis to determine strategy recommendations for combating the GWOT and achieving enduring regime change in Afghanistan and Iraq. A critical step in this analysis is to identify the center of gravity and then determine the critical capabilities, requirements, and vulnerabilities.³ This study identifies violent ideology as the center of gravity in the GWOT with two critical capabilities; conducting violent acts (terrorism), and promoting violent ideology.⁴ George Bush, in his speech to the National Endowment for Democracy on October 6, 2005, said, "We're facing a radical ideology with unalterable objectives: to enslave whole nations and intimidate the world...they target nations whose behavior they believe they can change through violence."⁵ In this speech, President Bush repeatedly mentions this radical and violent ideology and describes the efforts on the part of the terrorists to not only carry out violent acts but more importantly to promote this ideology.

To date, most of the effort (military, political, informational, and economic) at combating terrorist organizations with global reach has been aimed at terrorism itself; that is, against the critical capability of conducting violent acts. OEF and OIF operations have cost American taxpayers more than \$200 billion in supplemental defense appropriations alone.⁶ Although significant progress has been made in rooting out terrorists and removing repressive regimes,

undoubtedly the hostilities will continue for the foreseeable future and will require additional supplemental defense appropriations so long as the overall GWOT objectives remain unfulfilled. Much of the popular criticism today is focused on continued hostilities and skepticism over successful long-term regime change.

This paper argues that efforts must be re-channelled and focused on the second critical capability in this center of gravity analysis, promotion of violent ideology. Delving deeper into the analysis, a critical requirement of promoting violent ideology is the insurance of illiteracy of the people and the repression of women. Widespread illiteracy and repression of women's role in society facilitates terrorists' abilities to find sanctuaries, recruit new terrorists, promote "mob" culture, promote intolerance, and ensure the stability of their oppressive regime. As a result, the critical vulnerabilities of radical Islamic terrorists and extremists include literacy programs, gender equality, promotion of tolerance and exposure to foreign ideas, religions, and cultures. These vulnerabilities should be the focus of U.S. foreign policy and strategy towards Iraq and Afghanistan. However, to date, only \$1.5 billion has been dedicated to promotion of education in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁷ There have been multiple efforts to promote women's issues, such as the U.S.-Afghan Women's Council, the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative, and the advent of the Afghan Women's Affairs Ministry. However, much work and more funding is required to make the deeper inroads that are required to unravel the web of deception from extremist violent ideology.

Theorizing About Regime Change

In today's global economic market, no country can progress and reach its true potential without the participation of the entire population, male or female. Studies have shown that when women are educated and when women enter the workplace, living standards rise overall. Furthermore, when women are allowed to vote and hold public office, democracy for everyone can thrive.⁸ In what Thomas Barnett refers to as "non-integrated gap countries," such as Iraq and Afghanistan, where oppressive governments completely decimated the infrastructure of their civil societies, important progress can be made by attending to women's issues and fostering education.⁹ Women's rights and education are at the very core of building a civil, law-abiding society; true prerequisites for true democracies.

Recent studies about democratization have largely agreed that rule of law, political and judicial infrastructures, and a law-abiding and free citizenry are necessary basics for developing democracies.¹⁰ However, developing democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan must address the contextual problems that have inhibited the development of a free civil society, which can

debate issues openly to find solutions, and can address the specific concerns to benefit their societies. Arguably, among the biggest inhibitors to creating this needed diverse and energetic citizenry has been policies concerning women and the nature of education systems. While some scholars have included general comments about women's roles and how education benefits democracies, they fail to adequately address these issues as prerequisites for consolidation. This research paper asserts that ensuring women's rights and promoting education benefits not only individuals and their families, it also strengthens democracy, bolsters prosperity, enhances stability, and encourages tolerance. Helping societies realize their full potential is an overarching goal of the National Security Strategy of the United States.¹¹

Women's issues and education are at the heart of Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan's five key arenas necessary for successful democratic transition and consolidation. The five arena's are the development of a free and lively civil society, the existence of a relatively autonomous and valued political society, the establishment of a rule of law to legally guarantee citizen's freedoms, the existence of a usable state bureaucracy, and an institutionalized economic society.¹² While the role of women and promotion of literacy programs are of critical importance in all five of Linz and Stepan's arenas, it is especially crucial for democratic consolidation in three of the arenas: developing a complex civil society, establishing a valued rule of law, and creating a socially and politically regulated economy. The legacy of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and Hussein's dictatorship in Iraq institutionalized the enforcement of repressive laws that alienated women, stifled education, and suppressed market economies. A concerted focus on elevating the role of women and providing educational opportunities for all Afghan and Iraqi citizens will play a critical role in consolidating regime change in these countries.

Center of Gravity – Violent Ideology

Before we consider a strategy for dealing with the GWOT and affecting successful regime change, it is important to understand the center of gravity, the violent ideology of radical militant Islam extremism, or jihadist ideology.¹³ The use of jihadist ideology can be seen in *The Al-Qaeda Training Manual*. It spells out the issues which bin Laden believes he can use to call his Muslim brothers to arms. First, the literary and powerful rhetoric quality of the opening pages justifies their violence and inspires Muslim jihadists. According to the editor, Jerrold M. Post, powerful rhetoric is highly valued among Muslim populations. A notable aspect of Al-Qaeda's leadership (both Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri) is their capacity to justify and inspire through their language.¹⁴ Second, the extreme orthodox interpretation of the Koran by the jihadists blocks education to girls over the age of eight, imposes a severe women's dress code

requiring the full covering of all body parts, and subordinates women to men. In the manual, bin Laden calls out to men to strike out against western culture and its emphasis on women's rights, equality and education, in order to protect their traditional stature over women.¹⁵ Third, the manual shows the distortion of Qu'ran verses from the traditional discussion of rewards given in afterlife to men who lead a good life to the radical interpretation that justifies suicidal terrorism. Finally, the introduction in the manual addresses male youth who are typically among the vanguard of revolution. Here, these youth are inspired to turn away from apostate leaders and are provided a comprehensive ideological framework interpreted and distorted by Al-Qaeda leadership.¹⁶

The National Strategy for Combating Terrorism states, "The enemy is not one person...not a single political regime...not a religion. The enemy is terrorism – premeditated, politically-motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents."¹⁷ This keystone document explains that terrorism is not new; although today's global "force-multiplier effect" has the potential to magnify the terrorist threat through interconnectivity, advanced telecommunications, dispersion, and future Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).¹⁸ To date, most of our nation's effort against the GWOT has been targeted at terrorism itself, specifically against those who support or conduct violent acts. Terrorism in this sense can be seen as one of the critical capabilities of the violent ideology in this center of gravity analysis. In a recent address, Ambassador Dennis Ross, was specific in pointing out that what we are facing is not a war against terrorism; rather, terrorism is a tool, or a means by which extremist groups are using to achieve their objectives. Although it is clear that we must root out terrorism and cannot afford to lose in Iraq, Ambassador Ross further explains that we need a statecraft model to reach our objectives which considers the ways and means of all the elements of power.¹⁹

In considering Ambassador Ross' assertion, it becomes quite clear that U.S. policy towards combating the GWOT has been focused on the use of hard power, and has missed another critical capability of the violent ideology; specifically, the promotion of that ideology. Combating this critical capability requires an analysis of its critical requirements, which include: oppressive regimes with ineffective governments, populations that are illiterate, repression of women, intolerance, and populations which provide sanctuary for their extremists. These are the types of regimes where we see that violent ideology of Al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations can thrive and spread. To combat this capability requires the use of soft power; elements of power that can build infrastructure to produce an educated populace, with effective governance that provides for basic needs and ensures justice and equality for all.

Education: Recruitment and Sanctuary to Knowledge Economy

Historically, locally run *madrasas* (religious schools) were founded to teach the intricacies of the complex Islam religion to Muslim elites and learned students.²⁰ These prestigious institutions were, at one time, centers of creative thought and religious debate. However, due to the economic state of many Muslim countries, *madrasas* became the primary education for millions of Muslims, exclusively teaching the Qu'ran and the Arabic language. The methods for instruction include rote memorization of Qu'ran verses and interpretations of the school's Muslim clerics. This teaching format is reminiscent of early 19th and 20th century Catholic education and even public education institutions throughout Christian societies. Students are intimidated and ill-equipped to question cleric interpretation.²¹ Furthermore, in more recent times, *madrasas* excluded the teaching of sciences and other subjects requiring the development of critical thinking skills, expanding one's knowledge of the world, and contributing to an atmosphere of tolerance through understanding.²²

Additionally, the Islam *madrasas* in many Muslim countries experienced a sort of "brain drain" of their brightest minds.²³ Many of these individuals are no longer training in the local *madrasas*. Instead, they are training to be doctors, lawyers, engineers, and computer scientists, and in many cases taking up residence in European countries and the United States. The local *madrasas* now attract weaker students who do not have the economic means or intellectual capacity to attend competitive schools of higher education. The weaker students develop into Muslim clerics, perpetuating and reinforcing their extreme and violent views in the local mosques. In places, such as Pakistan, many of the *madrasas*, filled with unemployed and disenfranchised youth, have become the "worst breeding ground for the most virulent type of fanaticism."²⁴ This fanaticism or extremism has been the focal point for recruitment into terrorist organizations, such as Al-Qaeda.²⁵

In many Muslim countries, such as Afghanistan, *purdah* (the separation and veiling of women) was, and continues to be widespread, and few girls ever attended school. Since the 1920's, several leaders in Afghanistan attempted to modernize the role of women by eliminating *purhad*. But, efforts met with considerable resistance from religious elites and tribal leaders. In the 1970's under Soviet occupation, many Afghan women gained educational and economic opportunities through Soviet institutions in Moscow or from Soviet experts in Kabul. However, this empowerment of women was largely seen by Muslim men as godlessness, unwanted foreign intervention, and cultural degradation. Today, we can see the vestiges of this thinking in the language of "jihad" and the notion of protecting women's purity and Islamic values.²⁶ Today in Afghanistan, cultural barriers and security concerns still play a major role in limiting female

attendance in school. Of the nearly four million Afghan children (out of seven million school age children) enrolled in school, only 25 percent are girls. Less than a third of school age girls attend school compared to more than 70 percent of their male counterparts. Not surprisingly, female literacy in Afghanistan is among the lowest in the world.²⁷

Efforts at increasing access to and gender parity in education supports the U.S. National Strategy for Combating Terrorism goal of diminishing the underlying conditions that terrorists seek to exploit. But, increasing access to education for all must include education in a variety of subjects beyond the Qu'ran and the Arabic language. Schools must teach children science, social studies, mathematics, and health so that tolerance and understanding can be allowed to flourish. Education is a way of making sure that girls and boys have an equal start in life and the chance to grow and develop according to their potential. We also know that educated mothers are more likely to send their girls to school, to look after the health of their family better, to have smaller families, and educated women are less exposed to exploitation and risks such as the ever increasing global threat of HIV/AIDS. Enabling women and men to benefit equally from what the world has to offer and to contribute equally to society is a goal that involves much more than education. However, education must be at the heart of these efforts to mitigate the underlying conditions that terrorists seek to exploit for recruitment and sanctuary. Furthermore, there has been a growing awareness in the Arab world since the mid-1990s that Arab education systems are not producing students equipped with the skills necessary for a global economy.

Yet the problems of Arab education systems are more profound than simply preparing students better in math and science, and changing the methodology of rote memorization techniques. The challenges confronting Arab education systems throughout the Middle East include chronic underfunding, oversized classes, minimally proficient teachers, disconnected parents, and ideological battles over curriculum.²⁸ Afghan and Iraqi educational systems reflect the bigger problem of politics and governance: a paternalist and minimally legitimate state. These educational systems have essentially become instruments of political control.

International involvement with educational reform in Afghanistan and Iraq necessarily must be approached with cultural and religious sensitivity and care. Religion is likely to remain an important component of the curriculum in these countries and thus must be accommodated. Instead of debating the inclusion of religion in the curricula, focus on reform should emphasize access to knowledge. Teacher training and professional education are critically important to the future of this region. At the same time, there is a significant lack of Arabic translations of the world's "great literature."²⁹ More targeted international funding through grants to organizations

such as the National Endowment of Democracy will be necessary to provide translations and needed resources for reforming education systems.

Included in this “access to knowledge” is providing access to technologies in knowledge-based industries such as telecommunications, information management, software development, and hardware procurement. The international community’s investment in providing access to the “global knowledge economy” has the potential of paying big dividends not only in educational reform but also in the development of new opportunities for economic growth in Afghanistan and Iraq.³⁰ According to the International Telecommunication Development Report 2003, Iraq and Afghanistan rank among the lowest in the world for computer access and internet connectivity. Even if only compared to other countries in their region, Afghanistan and Iraq still fare low averaging fewer than five personal computers per 1000 people, and virtually little to no access to the internet.³¹ Afghanistan and Iraq’s obvious lag in information technology will not necessarily provide the “key” to unlocking reform in education and economic integration. Likewise, it can be argued that investment in this area over the long term is more likely to provide substantial benefits through technology development, training, educational partnerships, and scientific exchanges.³²

A natural extension to accessing the “global knowledge economy” is the promotion of new and independent media in not only Afghanistan and Iraq, but also among all countries in the region. This change must coincide with developing a rule of law protecting intellectual freedom. In this area, the United States would be well advised to establish programs that afford opportunities for media exchanges. A free and independent media will enhance education reform and bring international ideals to the people of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Additionally, the United States strategy for educational reform must strike a delicate balance between protecting the security of our nation and maintaining open borders for foreign students to receive education in our learning institutions. The Bush Administration must task the Department of State to streamline its visa policies to allow more students from Iraq and Afghanistan (and other specifically designated countries) to study in the United States. While making significant improvements to our intelligence processes, the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Act of 2004 (IRTPA) created an unfortunate byproduct of bogging down the ability of Iraqi and Afghan students to obtain visas for educational pursuits.³³ If our visa process continues to deter Arab visitors, the United States will be cutting off worthy cultural, educational, and scientific exchanges that have the potential of deepening consolidation success in Afghanistan and Iraq.³⁴

Women's Issues – Intolerance and Islamic Law to Building Civil Society

The repression of women in Afghan and Iraqi civil society is not attributable to Islam as is reported and discussed in much of today's media. The Qu'ran does not discriminate against women. However, many Muslim societies are marked with patriarchal practices that discriminate and in many cases violate the basic human rights of women. In progressive Muslim literature, gender bias is due to interpretation by extremists and do not represent mainstream Muslims who are indeed moderate, liberal, and progressive.³⁵ Interestingly, a recent Freedom House report assessing women's rights in 17 Arab countries found that all except Saudi Arabia have constitutions that mandate equality between men and women. However, little effort is made to inform women of the laws that protect them in their own constitution.³⁶ To understand the reasons behind this failure, one must look at the sources of Islam tradition.

The Qu'ran is clearly regarded by Muslims as being the absolute authoritative source of Islam. However, *hadith* literature is the lens through which much of the negative ideas and attitudes towards women are derived. *Hadith* scholars, highly regarded and considered by Sunni Muslims to be the most highly authoritative, are influenced significantly by the culture of seventh and eighth centuries. Furthermore, sources of Islamic tradition have exclusively been interpreted by Muslim men. It is hardly surprising that a vast majority of Muslim women have remained "in the dark" about their constitutional rights. Rather, Muslim men have consistently asserted that Islam has provided more rights to women than any other religion, while keeping women in confinement and depriving them of opportunities to reach their potential.³⁷

The Qu'ran, as interpreted by progressive Muslims, affirms fundamental rights for all human beings including: the right to life, respect, justice, freedom, privacy, protection from slander, the right to acquire knowledge, sustenance, work, the right to enjoy the bounties created by God, the right to leave one's homeland under oppressive conditions, and the right to "the Good Life." Muslim women share all these rights with men alike. Moreover, although the Qu'ran appears in many ways to be weighted in favor of women, many of its women-related teachings have been used in patriarchal Muslim societies against, rather than for women. Examples of Qu'ranic ideals versus Muslim realities are numerous regarding women's issues including attitudes towards female children, marriage and marital problems, child rearing and child custody, polygamy, inheritance, segregation and veiling (*purdah*), and family planning. In each of these issues affecting women, there is a vast difference in what the Qu'ran teaches and the practices of patriarchic Muslim societies.

Examples abound to illustrate the chasm between Qu'ran teachings and Muslim realities. However, one simple illustration emerged in the media and has seemingly attained vast importance: proper Muslim women's dress.³⁸ The Qu'ran explicitly requires modest dress for both men and women. It does not detail exactly what that means except to offer two guidelines: that the dress follow local custom and the person's station in life, meaning the type of work he or she is involved in. However, in a later section of the Qu'ran, a very specific group of women, the Prophet's wives, are asked to accept exceptional circumstances upon the death of their husband Prophet. They are instructed to wear special concealing garments and in return they are promised double the eternal reward of ordinary mortals.³⁹ Modern progressive Muslims interpret these guidelines to mean that modest people should avoid attracting special attention to themselves through their clothing. This accounts for the fact that today there are millions of Muslim women who do not wear any head scarves or head to toe coverings. However, extremists ignore any of this debate. To them, *hijab*, or Islamic women's dress code is mandatory and punishable by harsh law. Although this is a seemingly trivial example of the divergence between what the Qu'ran teaches and what is practiced in the Muslim societies of Afghanistan and Iraq, the fact remains that extremism is the backbone of terrorist violent ideology and does not represent mainstream thought in the Islamic religion.

These negative ideas and attitudes have had and continue to have a profound affect on the physical, psychological, and emotional well-being of women in Muslim Afghan and Iraqi societies. The manifestation of this repression has created "...masses of Muslim women with low self-esteem who place little value on their life or its quality."⁴⁰ These feelings are then easily passed along to their children who can then be more easily inspired to act on their despair. Suppression of women facilitates and enables male extremists' ability to brainwash young males. This is the type of "breeding ground" that terrorists will attempt to exploit in order to promote their ideology.

Aside from Islamic law and fundamentalist interpretation of the Qu'ran, advancing consolidation of democracy in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as combating the promotion of violent ideology will necessarily involve the development of a lively and free civil society in which issues (such as religious interpretation) can be openly debated and issues resolved. However, this environment can only be fostered if both women and men are involved in the process and that the process itself is contextual to the specific concerns in the societies of Afghanistan and Iraq. This process must not be imposed by western societies and must be devised through an Islamic framework that takes into consideration and builds upon the intricate socioeconomic relationships and infrastructure of the former system. Assuming that the complete destruction of

the entire old Afghan and Iraqi world will necessarily lead to something more entrepreneurial and akin to the Western world is detrimental to the process itself. Instead, the changes must be born and nurtured from existing norms within society.

To understand the difficulty of transition, comprehensive lessons can be drawn from the experiences of East European nations. Undergoing the process of democratization following the fall of the Soviet Union's iron curtain meant an ideological and material shift from socialism toward capitalism. Assumptions that projected rapid growth of market-based economies and expansive democratization were shattered in the wake of more than a decade of good ideas, massive funding, and sincere intentions from the international community. Although there are a number of reasons for these challenges, there remains one area that has emerged as a beacon for affecting democratic change in post-Soviet societies: the role of women in nation building, economic survival, and civic activism.⁴¹

One of the major trends throughout post-Soviet transition that contributed most successfully to the consolidation of democracy was the rise of women's participation in Non-Government Organizations (NGO) as an "unintended consequence" of economic survival. In Azerbaijan, for example, multiple factors are behind women's strong representation in NGOs: (1) women's exclusion from government and business power centers; (2) women's skills in networking and linguistics; (3) women's traditional role in and responsibility for social problems like disabilities, health, and children's issues; (4) women's desire to avoid corruption; and (5) women's secondary status leaving open opportunities for participation that lack monetary compensation. Where women have had noticeably little access to formal levels of government, there has been an unprecedented increase in women's participation in informal politics, building civil society, and in NGOs.⁴²

The challenges of post-Soviet transitions to democracy in Eastern Europe and Latin America also fueled the development of grassroots women's organizations. Many women came together in response to the practical and financial pressures experienced by women as a result of the democratic reform process. Their aims and activities necessarily focused on combating these pressures, pooling resources, and extending emotional support to other women. As these organizations grew, women and their families not only benefited economically, but these organizations helped to focus women's sense of social responsibility into forms of civic action and community-based activism.⁴³

Women's role in post-Soviet transitions should be considered in the development of strategies for peaceful regime change in the Middle East and for combating the Global War on Terrorism. Women's traditional roles as family nurturers provide the interest needed for NGO

participation, developing grassroots organizations, and for building a more lively civil society that will address issues affecting Muslim families. Doing so, using all elements of power, creates a significant opportunity to mitigate the influence of extremists.

Strategy Recommendations

This author argues that the U.S. must concentrate its efforts on combating the critical capability of promoting violent ideology in the Global War on Terrorism, instead of attacking terrorism itself. A focus on educational reform and equal treatment of women will have secondary and tertiary consequences of building a free and lively society with a balanced and equitable rule of law that can support a growing and robust economy; all necessary for peaceful regime change and democratization. Many progressive Muslims have written about methods that can be used to eradicate extremist and violent ideology:

The best hope for liberating ... the Muslim world from extremists – whether religious or antireligious – is the emergence of an educated group of persons who understand Islam to be a religion of justice and compassion, of knowledge and reason, of openness and peace, and who believe that it is possible to build a justice-centered society within the ethical framework of the Qu'ran, which is the Magna Carta of human rights.⁴⁴

The importance of education aimed at producing a civil law-abiding citizenry, tolerant of all members of its population and international neighbors cannot be underestimated in combating terrorism and bringing about enduring regime change. In doing so, the education system of the past (*madrasas*) must be expanded to include other subjects that will open the minds of its youth and help contribute to tolerance. However, the education system must include a progressive Muslim interpretation of the Qu'ran, involving input and debate from Muslim women. This change will necessarily require that Muslim clerics, representing the current Muslim mainstream, need to become more forthright in condemning the heinous acts of the few. In much of the literature, it is clear that mainstream interpretation of the Islam religion neither condones nor supports extremist ideology.

Education reform can be significantly bolstered through targeted investment in the development of information technologies throughout the region. Technology in this area has the potential to open up educational opportunities through university exchanges and distance learning initiatives. Information technology will also provide media outlets for developing a better informed civil society.

Additionally, it is imperative to promote women's rights within an Islamic framework. The good news in the case of Iraq is that women currently have one of the highest levels of political representation in the world (31 percent). However, in light of these numbers, well-organized

Shiite political parties continue to dominate and are determined to implement Sharia law and enforce patriarchal social conservatism. The gap between the religious conservatives and progressives seems extensive. Despite these ideological differences, they do share many concerns including furthering women's political participation, economic empowerment, and education.

We might be well advised to look at building coalitions across the ideological gamut and promote more progressive Islamic law. One way to accomplish this might be to set up dialogue groups between Sunni and Shiite women to discuss various interpretations of Islamic law governing women. In doing so, media should be used, through newspapers and women's magazines, television, and internet to provide a forum for discussion and to educate women in democratic reform and gender issues. The development of informational outlets for discussion through women's publications, television and internet has the potential to bring to light gender perspectives in a broader context of reform.⁴⁵ Although this type of informational influence and education is a long-term undertaking, this type of strategy might be useful to implement in Iraq, initially with the educated minority and as literacy improves, with the educated majority.

Finally, U.S. National Policy should support education and women's rights in Iraq and Afghanistan in ways that are effective yet culturally nonthreatening. United States diplomatic efforts must stop its imposition that "what's right for America is right for everyone." Afghanistan and Iraq transitions will need to be developed from the inside out, instead of imposed from the outside in. Transition can be more effectively and least costly accomplished through multilateral support and the encouragement of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) and private group participation. Efforts should be backed by targeted funding for education programs and technology not only to bring literacy rates up, but for tertiary education targeted at building the capacity of women leaders and developing a politically active civil society. If America truly wants to inspire the success of Afghanistan and Iraq's transition, and win in the Global War on Terrorism, it needs to de-emphasize the use of military power and try a softer approach; through promotion of education and supporting women's rights with the resources appropriate to the strategic importance of the task at hand.

Endnotes

¹ George W. Bush, "President Discusses the Future in Iraq," 26 February 2003, (Washington D.C.: American Enterprise Institute); available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030226-11.html>; internet; accessed 15 December 2005.

² There are numerous books, articles, and internet discourses available concerning the democratic peace theory. For a comprehensive bibliography of works published throughout the 1990's see: <http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/BIBLIO.HTML>; internet; accessed 28 December 2005. For a more recent example see: Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey, eds., *Democracy, Liberalism, and War: Rethinking the Democratic Peace Debate* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001).

³ The method used for this center of gravity analysis is taken from: Joe Strange, "Centers of Gravity & Vulnerabilities: Building on the Clausewitzian Foundation So That We Can All Speak the Same Language," *Perspectives on Warfighting*, No. 4, 2nd edition, Marine Corps University (1996).

⁴ The ideas in the framework used for this center of gravity analysis are attributed to the cogent analysis by Colonel David L. Connors in his unpublished "Theater Campaign Plan: Sample Enemy Center of Gravity Analysis," November 2001.

⁵ President Bush's speech to the National Endowment for Democracy can be found at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/10/20051006-3.html>; internet; accessed 31 January 2006.

⁶ Information on budget supplementals, amendments, and releases can be found at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/amendments.htm>; internet; accessed 28 October 2005.

⁷ Recent reports circulated by the Council on Foreign Relations assert that the world development assistance going into primary education for both girls and boys is about 1.5 billion dollars, of which the United States contributes about 25%. According to these reports, achieving universal education goals would cost \$5-10 billion per year. These are referenced throughout the cited document with hyperlinks to the reports found at: http://www.cfr.org/publication/8171/power_and.promise_of_girls_education.html; internet; accessed 15 February 2006.

⁸ The Council on Foreign Relations has conducted extensive research into the benefits of educating women: http://www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/Girls_Education_full.pdf; internet; accessed 15 February 2006. The World Bank has also done interesting studies on the correlation between women's education and economic growth in developing nations. Completed studies found at: <http://www.worldbank.org/>; internet; accessed 27 February 2006.

⁹ "Non-integrated gap countries" are referred to in: Thomas P.M. Barnett, *The Pentagon's New Map* (New York: G.P Putnam's Sons, 2004).

¹⁰ Recent studies include: Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, *Democracy in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracies*, 2nd ed. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999); Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Boulder: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

¹¹ George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington D.C.: The White House, September 2002), 1-2.

¹² Linz and Stepan, 7-15.

¹³ Amyn B. Sajoo, ed, *Civil Society in the Muslim World: Contemporary Perspectives* (New York: I.B. Taurus Publishers, 2004), 231-232. Jihad, in its truest sense of the word, means “a spiritual fight against an evil in yourself.” According to the Qu’ran, physical action is permitted to fight aggression or support a struggle for justice. However, there are strict guidelines using violence. Al-Qaeda has violated these guidelines most notably in their killing of innocent civilians and suicidal terrorism.

¹⁴ Jerrold M. Post, ed., *Military Studies in the Jihad against the Tyrants: The Al-Qaeda Training Manual* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: USAF Counterproliferation Center, 2005), 13-14.

¹⁵ Ibid., 15.

¹⁶ Ibid., 16-19. According to Islamic tradition, a warrior who gives his life in a true jihad, translated to mean holy war, becomes a martyr, or shahid, who will be guaranteed entry into God’s paradise. This was for the most part true in the 7th century. However, during the 9th century Muslim clerics broadened the meaning of jihad to emphasize a personal internal struggle. As a result, for tens of millions of Muslims, jihad refers to a personal struggle for self-improvement. Moreover, Islamic Sufism adds a mystical element to jihad and Islam. It is important to note that mainstream Islam has moved away from the militant interpretation of jihad in that anyone who successfully spreads the word of God and the works of the prophet (Mohammed) is considered a shahid.

¹⁷ George W. Bush, *National Strategy For Combating Terrorism* (Washington D.C.: The White House, February 2003), 1.

¹⁸ Ibid, 11.

¹⁹ Dennis Ross, “U.S. Grand Strategy and Policy in the Middle East,” briefing for Lesson 22 of the Middle East Symposium, Carlisle Barracks, U.S. Army War College, 2 December 2005.

²⁰ Recep Senturk, “Minority Rights in Islam: From Dhimmi to Citizen” in *Islam and Human Rights: Advancing a U.S.-Muslim Dialogue*, ed. Shireen T. Hunter (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2005), 69.

²¹ Ibid., 70.

²² Omid Safi, ed., *Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender and Pluralism* (Oxford, England: OneWorld Publications, 2003), 18-20.

²³ Ibid., 20.

²⁴ Ibid., 19.

²⁵ For an in depth explanation of the psychology and decisions to join terrorist groups, see Randy Borum, *Psychology of Terrorism* (Tampa, FL: University of South Florida, 2004), 22-29.

²⁶ Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 90-100.

²⁷ *Literacy Estimates and Projection*, 2002 ed. (Division of Statistics, UNESCO, 2002). Statistics can be obtained by country search through UNESCO website at www.unesco.org; internet; accessed 20 December 2005. Illiteracy and gender parity in Iraq is not much better than Afghanistan; illiteracy of adult women is at about 70 percent compared to adult men at 40 percent.

²⁸ UNESCO has several documents and reports which outline the challenges of developing education systems in the Middle East. See *Education for All: Literacy for Life* available from <http://www.unesco.org/education/information/wer/PDFeng/wholewer.PDF>; internet; accessed 15 February 2006. See also the World Education Report available from <http://www.unesco.org/education/information/wer/PDFeng/wholewer.PDF>; internet; accessed 15 February 2006.

²⁹ The British Council has recently held a seminar which addressed the issue of lack of Arabic translations in literature. They have published a report available from <http://www.britishcouncil.org/arts-literature-events-overseas-damascus-seminar.htm>; internet; accessed 15 February 2006.

³⁰ "Knowledge Economy" is a term coined by the following Independent Task Force Report: Council on Foreign Relations, *In Support of Arab Democracy: Why and How* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, Inc., 2005), 23.

³¹ The International Telecommunication Union website provides statistical data concerning Information Communication Technologies (ICT) indicators by country, including percentages of households that have electricity, radio, television, telephone, personal computers, and internet connectivity, available from <http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/partnership/index.html>; internet; accessed 28 December 2005.

³² A model for this type of investment occurred in the late 1980's and 1990's with the United States and its European partners helping Israel's technological advancement, thereby bolstering their economy and paying dividends throughout the information technology sector.

³³ *Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004*, Public Law 104-458, sec. 5301(17 December 2004).

³⁴ Student visas will need to be issued with associated checks and balances to ensure that anyone who violates the terms of their visa is reported, tracked down, and incarcerated/deported accordingly. This strategy change will require a fundamental cultural shift within U.S. institutions of higher education and local/federal law enforcement agencies.

³⁵ "Progressive muslims" are concerned with striving towards a universal notion of justice. Justice includes social justice, gender issues, and pluralism. For progressive interpretations of the Qu'ran, see Omid Safi, ed., *Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender and Pluralism* (Oxford, England: Oneworld Publications, 2003); Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and John L Esposito, eds., *Islam, Gender, and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Mohammad Ali Syed, *The Position of Women in Islam* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2004).

³⁶ *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Citizenship and Justice*, (Freedom House, May 20, 2005) available from <http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/menasurvey/>; Internet; accessed 30 November 2005.

³⁷ For contemporary views regarding *hadith* methodology and its fabrication and inauthenticity see Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987). For a focus on the ways in which gender discourses evolved historically within the formative Muslim communities, see Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 153.

³⁸ There are numerous editorials regarding the proper Muslim female dress and conduct. Most notably, the issue of *hijab*, or Islamic women's "dress code" was brought to international attention in a speech given to Muslim women in Saudi Arabia by Karen Hughes ,Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, 27 September 2005. In this speech she admonishes *hijab* and asserts that the Saudi ban on driving by women has negatively shaped the image of Saudi society in the United States.

³⁹ Cheryl Benard, *Civil Democratic Islam: Partners, Resources, and Strategies* (Pittsburgh: Rand Corporation, 2003), 21.

⁴⁰ Riffat Hassan, "Women's Rights in Islam: Normative Teachings Versus Practice" in *Islam and Human Rights: Advancing a U.S.-Muslim Dialogue*, ed. Shireen T. Hunter (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2005), 55.

⁴¹ Kathleen Kuehnast and Carol Nechemias, eds., *Post-Soviet Women Encountering Transition: Nation Building, Economic Survival, and Civic Activism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 1-20.

⁴² Nayereh Tohidi, "Women, Building Civil Society, and Democratization in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan," in *Post-Soviet Women Encountering Transition: Nation Building, Economic Survival, and Civic Activism*, eds. Kathleen Kuehnast and Carol Nechemias (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 149-167.

⁴³ For information on Russian women's grassroots organizations see Rebecca Kay, "Meeting the Challenge Together? Russian Grassroots Women's Organizations and the Shortcomings of Western Aid," in *Post-Soviet Women Encountering Transition: Nation Building, Economic Survival, and Civic Activism*, eds. Kathleen Kuehnast and Carol Nechemias (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 241-261. For information on Latin American grassroots organizations see Elizabeth Jelin, "Human Rights and the Memory of Political Violence and Repression: Constructing a New Field in social Science," in *Rethinking Development in Latin America*, eds. Charles H. Wood and Bryan R. Roberts (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 183-201.

⁴⁴ Hassan, 62.

⁴⁵ Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Debating Women: Gender and the Public Sphere in Post-Revolutionary Iran," in *Civil Society in the Muslim World: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed., Amyn B. Sajoo, (London: I.B. Taurus Publishers, 2004), 95-100.